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ABSTRACT

The proceedings of the fourth annual Association of Writing Supervisors within the City University of New York (CUNY) are offered in this special newsletter issue. The papers from the proceedings are organized under the five thematic strands of the conference, which confronted the central issues of writing instruction at CUNY. The five strands are (1) literacy and employment, including employers' viewpoints and teaching career-oriented writing courses; (2) writing assessment, including the CUNY Writing Test and the curriculum, the New York City Schools and the City University, and the CUNY Writing Test and current research in writing; (3) grants for college writing programs; (4) writing instruction and English as a second language; and (5) teaching models, including affective approaches, planning courses, language styles and voices, and methods of teaching writing. (RL)

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PROCEEDINGS OF THE FOURTH ANNUAL CUNY ASSOCIATION OF WRITING SUPERVISORS (CAWS) CONFERENCE

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"Developing College Writers"

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Stephan Khinoy, College of Staten Island

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Preface

"Developing College Writers," the fourth annual CAWS Conference, demonstrated the new confidence of a City University finally emerging from the dark days of its budget crises and considering fresh terms for education in the 1980's. The five thematic strands of the Conference confronted the central issues of writing instruction in our evolving institution.

"Literacy and Employment," a new strand this year, responded to the continuing vocational concerns of our students. It established a forum in which representatives of business and government, educators, and CUNY students could share current perspectives on the importance of literate communication in the world of work.

The "Writing Assessment" strand confronted the emerging issue of competency testing, including CUNY's own examinations. Panels dealt with the effects of testing on the CUNY curriculum, the forthcoming Regents writing requirements for high school graduates, and the growing body of research on test results.

CUNY has continued to be a fertile source of new methods and programs in the field of writing. The strand devoted to "Grants for College Writing" not only reported on some of these developments, but served as a workshop for fermenting new ideas for future projects.

CAWS continued its dialogue with the teachers of English as a second language. The needs of large numbers of our students have made us increasingly aware of the value of the ESL perspective to our own classroom practice.

Finally, as always, the "Teaching Models" strand provided a trading post for new ideas and methods. Panels dealt with affective approaches to writing, the approach through language and voice, course planning, and other innovative techniques.

These proceedings reflect the vitality and concern with which writing is taught and studied at the City University. An even better index is the frankness and spontaneity of the participants themselves. We encourage you to contact participants for further information on any of the presentations, and we look forward to your participation in the 1981 conference.

Finally, we would like to thank the Instructional Resource Center for publishing these proceedings as a special issue of Resource, and particularly we would like to thank Barry Kwalick and Virginia Slaughter for their painstaking and valuable editorial assistance in preparing the manuscript.

Charles Bazerman
Baruch College

Stephen Khinoy
College of Staten Island

Conference Chairs

STRAND I: LITERACY AND EMPLOYMENT

Chairs: Carol Schoen, Lehman College
Linda Stanley, Queensborough Community College

A: Employers' Viewpoint

B: Teaching Career-Oriented Courses

C: The CUNY Degree and the Demands of the Working World: An Evaluation by CUNY Graduates

* * * * * * * * * *

A: Employers' Viewpoints
Chair: Linda Stanley
English Department
Queensborough Community College

Thomas H. Connelly
Vice President, Chase Manhattan Bank

Limits on a key resource, time, add an economic element to the need for clear and concise business writing. Whether the objective is analytical, functional, technical, or marketing-oriented, the organization of ideas is probably the most powerful tool in the writer's kit. Simplicity of language and syntax may require additional effort, but the writer should not expect to achieve his goal if he shifts the burden of communication to the reader.

Wilhelmina Cottman
Director for Employment Training and Education Programs,
Mayor's Office of Economic Development, New York City

As Director for Employment Training and Education Programs for the Mayor's Office of Economic Development (OED), I am involved with the city's efforts to increase job opportunties for New Yorkers through our various programs to attract, retain, and expand businesses. Recently, there has been concern that the quality of the NYC work force is declining and that this decline is responsible for the exodus of many companies.

The OED is attempting to reverse this trend through a program to coordinate job-training programs in the schools with job needs in the City, partly by establishing links with economic development projects administered by OED and tying in jobs to motivate students to strive for academic excellence.

It is important to note that the employment market has been improving in recent years, although that improvement is measured against massive job losses in the last decade. According to Bureau of Labor Statistics estimates, the upward trend will continue with an estimated 300,000 job openings per year in the NYC area between 1980 and 1985, and that 7.1 million people will be employed by 1985. Of that work force, 60% will be white-collar jobs, and 27% service jobs, with opportunities in blue-collar fields declining. This can be seen as a two-edged sword because while unemployment will decline, so will opportunities for the poor, the untrained and unskilled, the disadvantaged and the undereducated, due to an increasing demand for technical and professional skills of a higher calibre.

According to an OED survey of Fortune 500 companies to determine the impact of writing ability on applicant success in securing a job, as expected, candidates with major deficiencies in communication skills in areas such as grammar and syntax, spelling, sentence structure, paragraphing, and ability to organize thoughts coherently were screened out. It seems to us that there is a continued need for emphasis on improving skills in each of these areas, highlighting rewriting as a means of improving writing skills. Students need also to be better prepared for writing in a work situation. Curricula should include exercises which require them to request information in writing, file complaints, persuade vendors to reduce charges, convince managers to pick up the cost for a job-related conference, etc.

The OED conducted another survey; some of its findings were the following. The seeming lack of commitment to writing by CUNY professors stems from knowledge that the development and teaching of writing skills require a great deal of teacher effort. There's the notion that the high schools have failed to shoulder their responsibility for teaching writing. Decline in enrollment causes a greater decline in the number of teachers, forcing students to share fewer teachers. Furthermore, there has been a continual decline in enrollment in liberal arts and humanities. To accommodate students who are pursuing career-related fields, colleges have relaxed their requirements with respect to writing and other fields. There is a lack of agreement on just how writing skills should be taught. Existing programs highlight expository writing, which, if possible, should be tied in with career goals. Finally, college isn't for everyone; in fact, there is a greater demand for someone with technical skills than for someone with a degree.

As an outgrowth of these comments and in summation, we would like to make the following suggestions:

Instructors should emphasize proofreading and rewriting.

Assignments should relate to problems common to the work experience.

Writing should be clear, concise, and in popular language.

Courses should include instruction in business letter and memo writing.

These measures would better prepare college students for the business world if the following were also considered:

A greater commitment by teachers to the development of writing skills and the sharing of teaching approaches, alluding to NYU's Expository Writing program as a possible model.

The expansion of remedial programs with the objective of dismantling them after writing programs in the high schools and colleges begin to adequately prepare students.

The need to lobby for increased funding.

Development of outreach programs to NYC high schools.

Walter Blass
Director of Corporate Planning, New York Telephone

Effectiveness is the real issue in business writing--or speaking--not in any narrow sense, but in the sense in which Shakespeare's Henry V is an effective speaker. Can English teaching help? I hope at least that you insist that your students speak articulately in class. Make sure also that they sense audience reaction and adapt their presentation accordingly.

Persuasion isn't the only arena. Preparing to fire someone requires practically the same skills as those required for a short story or play--setting character, motive, clear progression of the plot, and consideration of alternate endings. Do you have your students diagram the progress of their essays the way you have them diagram sentences?

Poetry, also, is a useful exercise for anyone in business--both studying it and writing it. Poetry forces the writer to concentrate on alternative conceptions of how the piece might be written, or why one word should be used in place of another.

As Director of the Peace Corps in Afghanistan for two years in the middle sixties, I had to do a lot of counseling by letter. I found that the more emotional and unconscious the writer, the worse the handwriting and the syntax. But working through these feelings in written dialogue and using formal English as a discipline eventually led these writers to simple declarative sentences that had punch, the ring of truth, even a certain elegance.

Another technique which is useful both in counseling and editing is reversing "I" and "you." Someone has to read the writing as recipient, rather than as writer. Projection of one's feelings or grinding someone's face in the mud comes out rather quickly in changing the "you" in "You will submit this document by close of business Tuesday" to "I."

A few additional injunctions:

Insist that students state the question their writing seeks to answer--mushy question, mushy answer--and specify the action which should be taken as a result.

Familiarize your students with the use of style books.

Make your students summarize a lengthy piece of work.

Finally, insist at least twice a semester on letter-perfect products.

B: Teaching Career-Oriented Courses
Chair: Stephan Khinoy
English Department
College of Staten Island

"Role-Playing in Business Communication Courses:
The Harvard Business School Casebook Method"
Helene O'Connor
English Department, Queensborough Community College

My presentation focused first on the importance of role-playing as a motivational device for all writing, and particularly business writing, and second, on applications of it in a specific course.

Since major problems with all student writing are carelessness and lack of authorial confidence, combined paradoxically with unremitting introspection and utter obliviousness of audience, role-playing as a motivational device has several commendable aspects. Students are unaware to an alarming degree of the formality and tact that are basic to all business communication. Thus, when they respond and write, they feel free to be themselves, too often casual, careless, and vague. Role-playing, assuming another more formal persona--in dress, vocabulary, diction (immediate corrections), and writing--is a relatively painless introduction to the reality that awaits them. Demeanor, speech, and writing are no longer self-indulgent self-expression, but are evaluated as forms of communication judged on their effectiveness in a stringent arena.

My communications course, utilizing the Harvard Business School casebook method, involves sessions on letters of application, resumes, and a series of role-playing situations: interviews, personnel problems, sales presentations, and at the close of the semester, a workshop where each class member is assigned a corporate role, and a problem affecting the future of the corporation is "solved" in a series of meetings (at which minutes are taken), arranged by letter and memoranda, and followed up by more of the same until at a final board meeting, a decision is reached.

The many casebooks available in different business disciplines such as advertising and marketing are invaluable sources of role-playing situations for the instructor.

"Teaching Writing to Computer Science Majors"

Joseph Raben
English Department, Queens College

The core of the career-oriented writing program at Queens consists of eleven sections of English 6 intended for upper freshmen or sophomores as the second half of the one-year degree requirement in writing (the only current course requirement for graduation). Depending upon the avocational expertise of the English department, these courses offer opportunities to write on topics like music, law, medicine, social science, and (of course) literature. While the sections with no special orientation attract the bulk of students, those with a career orientation have proven popular since their introduction about four years ago.

My own section concentrates on computer science. By agreement with that department, it avoids all technical writing (such as program documentation) and emphasizes the traditional skills of organization and verbal expression. In subject-matter, however, it concentrates on problems generated by the growing impact of computers on modern society: technological unemployment, overloading of information channels, the mystique of technology, changing modes of education. For readings, I have compiled an anthology of essays dealing with these topics.

While technically not a course in writing, another that I offer is closely related to that skill and is also career oriented. Called "Introduction to Editing," it emphasizes the practice of copyediting and proofreading. Through specially prepared exercises, students scrutinize spelling, punctuation, grammar, and style. In deciding whether and how to alter the writing of others, they avowedly improve their own. That some of them have achieved editorial positions with reputable firms in New York is testimony to the course's fit with the needs of students in the current desperate situation of liberal arts majors.

"Teaching Writing to Students with Careers"
Shirley R. Schnitzer
English Department, John Jay College

For the past two years, John Jay College has offered a job-related writing course for its graduate students enrolled in Master's programs in public administration, criminal justice, forensic science, and forensic psychology. Most of the students are also employed full-time in middle management positions in the public sector--police or fire work, hospital administration, housing, and transportation. They do a great deal of informative writing in their present jobs and will be expected to compose evaluative reports and policy statements as they move up the organizational ladder.

The threefold aim of the course is to teach them to write clear, jargon-free prose; to organize their reports and memos so that a busy reader can, if necessary, get the gist of the piece from the opening segment; and to ground their expression in concrete facts as opposed to subjective impressions.

Classes meet once a week at night for two hours, with the group sitting around a conference table. In-class work includes on-the-spot writing exercises; critiquing of each other's and outsiders' writings; and group work in editing, revising, proofreading, summarizing, outlining, and analyzing grammatical and syntactical problems. Six formal home assignments, graduated in length from 500 to 1500 words, simulate typical job-writing assignments such as an analytic report, an instructional memo, a report on a guest speaker, and a formal proposal with attachments.

The only non-job-related assignment is the first, which focuses students' attention on the need for precision in writing by requiring them to devise a set of instructions for tying a shoelace. The moment of truth comes when students must read their instructions in class while others try to execute them on a real shoe.

C: The CUNY Degree and the Demands of the Working World: An Evaluation by CUNY Graduates
Chair: Carol Schoen
Academic Skills/SEEK
Lehman College

Panelists: Carlos Matir (Lehman)--lawyer,
Brooklyn District Attorney's Office
Scott Anderson (Queensborough, Queens)--
Executive Assistant to the Deputy Chancellor, CUNY
Timothy McLennon, (Staten Island, Hunter)--
nurse
Terry Cole (Lehman, Graduate Center)--
instructor, LaGuardia Community College

Each of the four speakers emphasized the need for greater attention to writing skills in college training. Mr. McLennon discussed the needs of the nursing profession, describing the records that must be maintained. Nurses must provide a full profile of the condition of every patient at the end of every shift. Because of the medical and legal implications, these reports must be clear and precise. In his experience hiring nurses, he has found many applicants from CUNY colleges who could not be considered for full-time employment because their writing skills were inadequate.

Mr. Matir spoke of the constant need to write in the legal profession. All research in legal practice is presented in the form of memos. If a lawyer wishes to suggest a legal theory or a new approach to a case, that, too, must be presented in writing. Arguments for judges' consideration are presented through written briefs. Mr. Matir saw a need for greater emphasis on the ability to state a proposition clearly and concisely, and to support it with logically presented arguments.

This recommendation was underscored by Mr. Anderson, who felt that inadequate attention had been paid to persuasive argumentation and correctness during his college years. While in college, he had been consistently closed out of classes in expository writing and the courses in creative writing he took instead had given him a false sense of competency. He called for more rigid standards in writing courses and suggested that students be taught such skills as resume writing and completing job application forms.

Mr. Cole, on the other hand, stressed the need to expand students' awareness -- of themselves, their cultural heritage, and the place of language in expressing different aspects of themselves. He suggested that there be greater correlation between writing courses and other disciplines in the college. He also felt that writing should be integrated into the total college experience, as well as into the student's work experience.

The place of black dialect was raised, and a dialogue followed between Mr. Anderson, who felt that students should be trained to avoid dialect as soon as possible, and Mr. Cole, who believed that students needed to first understand the place of dialect in their culture and their lives before they could be taught conventional language.

STRAND II: WRITING ASSESSMENT

Chair: Robert Lyons, Queens College

A: The CUNY Writing Test and the Curriculum

B: The New York City Schools and the University

C: The CUNY Writing Test and Current Research in Writing

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A: The CUNY Writing Test and the Curriculum

Kenneth A. Bruffee
English Department, Brooklyn College

The CUNY Writing Task Force is composed mostly of writing teachers. In designing the CUNY Writing Assessment Test, these teachers tried not only to provide a tool for placing students and governing their entry into upper level courses, but also to help improve curricula, teaching, and the general quality of education at CUNY. As a result, after designing the test itself, criteria for reading it, and a booklet explaining these criteria, the Task Force also drafted a curriculum model to stimulate discussion of writing curricula throughout the University.

The curriculum model attempts to fulfill the long-range aims of the test. The purpose of the test is to insure that CUNY undergraduates achieve a level of "minimal readiness" for college work. The Task Force defined "minimal readiness" in writing as being able to formulate, assert, and explain or defend a generalization in a brief essay that is rudimentarily unified and coherent, and that uses language conforming to the conventions of standard written English. This ability is the basis of the writing demanded in most academic, business, and professional situations. It is also necessary for learning the forms and techniques of writing usually taught in freshman composition.

The curriculum model is an attempt to sketch broadly one way of helping students gain that ability. Its three phases correspond to two levels of remediation and one of freshman composition. The model focuses on helping students perceive the need to assert an opinion or "position" in writing, and then helping them learn how to do so. It focuses also on fluency, elements of sentence structure, and careful editing.

Richard M. Bedrosian
Department of Writing & Speech, New York City Community College

The direct impact of the Writing Assessment Test on the writing curriculum at New York City Community College is limited to the adoption of the WAT as the college placement instrument in writing and as the exit test from developmental writing (non-credit, remedial) classes. Students are required to achieve a combined score of 8 (the CUNY minimum) in order to place into credit freshman composition. The remedial courses are experimentally taught in a two-level sequence. Faculty response has indicated that the WAT is working as an effective placement instrument for these courses. Particularly notable is the feeling that fewer students are now misplaced into freshman composition.

Less visible but equally important are the other gains resulting from the use of the WAT as the exit standard from remediation:

1. Closer articulation with the Developmental English unit which offers remedial writing classes for non-native students.

2. Clearer registration and advisement procedures, as even non-writing faculty know something about the WAT score and how to interpret it.

3. More uniform and less subjective grading standards across the writing curriculum.

4. A uniform framework of standards for our too large adjunct faculty.

5. More of an emphasis on writing assignments rather than on grammar exercises in remedial writing classes.

Course syllabi have still not been modified to come to terms with our substantial positive experiences with the WAT.

Cerisa Shopkow
Developmental Education Program, Brooklyn College

Since 1978, the Developmental Education Program (DEP) at Brooklyn College has provided a 9-credit core of developmental courses in reading, writing, and oral communication, and one elective course for freshmen who have failed the initial CUNY reading and writing placement tests. In order to prepare these students to retake the CUNY Writing Assessment Test (CWAT), for entrance into the regular freshmen composition course, we built into our writing curriculum a series of periodic, program-wide progress tests in essay writing and grammar in order to give students (and faculty) some idea of their level of achievement as they proceeded.

After several months of testing the students' ability to master classroom instruction and to develop their essay-writing skills, we found that we were not obtaining an accurate measure of their growth in writing: their test scores remained low or declined, while on a weekly and monthly basis we could see improvement in their writing. The tests we had been giving them--short passages of professionally written prose to read, paraphrase and respond to--were clearly a faulty measure of their writing abilities. Also, we were grading the essays on a scale of ever-increasing difficulty.

On an experimental basis, we began writing our own essay topics, modeling them closely on the CWAT style, the clearest indicators of their success in the course. From the first of these "mini-CWATS", the students began to demonstrate clearly the degree of their growth in writing. The CWAT-style tests tapped their ability to express what they knew in a more thoughtful and self-assured way.

In the second year of the DEP, the Faculty Council mandated that the CWAT retest would be the exit examination for all remedial and developmental writing courses. The DEP writing faculty focused the curriculum and instruction intensively on the essay's fundamental features, those that demonstrate competency according to the CWAT evaluation scale: fluency, clarity, a central point, organization, some degree of syntactic maturity, and a general grasp of correct grammar, punctuation and spelling. We saw this orientation of our course as vital, since the CWAT was no longer to be merely one measure, but <u>the</u> measure, of student progress for the year.

We continued to compose and grade tests using the CWAT model and criteria, a practice that served the dual purpose of showing students their degree of progress toward meeting the exit criteria for the course and enabling faculty to concentrate upon those aspects of their students' writing that need clarification, re-emphasis or reinforcement in instruction.

Our experience in the DEP writing course has shown us that by focusing instruction and the curriculum on the complex array of skills that underlie the standards for passing the CWAT, we can best continue to improve our teaching practices and to help students steadily approach mastery of the fundamentals of competent writing.

Eve Zarin
English Department, Lehman College

I am not sure we all understood in 1978, at the start of the CUNY-wide testing program in writing, that the Writing Skills Assessment Test (WAT) could exert influence not only on the writing curriculum in skills areas and in traditional English departments, but on the curriculum beyond these areas as well.

Our experience in teaching writing brought the Lehman writing faculty to the WAT with several important assets: we had useful experience with and confidence in subjectively evaluating writing samples to judge students' writing abilities, including specific placement in a writing sequence that already provided remedial and college-level courses. In addition, we had identified testing and curriculum development problems in the system we were using and were looking for solutions. For these reasons, it seems best to analyze the effect of the WAT on the writing curriculum at Lehman under three headings: the history of the curriculum, the immediate effects of the test, the current reconsiderations of the test.

The history of the writing curriculum. In the period 1973-78, the key features of the curriculum were the division of the sequence between the Academic Skills/SEEK Department (ACS) and the English Department, the resulting problems of liaison and coordination, and the growing failure rate in the final course of the sequence arising from imprecision of exit criteria in earlier courses and from problems in placing transfer students. 1977-78 was a transitional year. ACS and English worked on a new, coordinated writing sequence, using the WAT and complementary new SEEK guidelines as organizing principles.

The immediate effects of the WAT. At first, we were most conscious of the "halo effect." Concentration on effective testing and grading procedures created a positive evaluation of the test's effects: homogeneity of classes, the rational flow of the writing sequence, improved liaison and coordination of the efforts of the two departments.

As we gained experience, we raised these questions: Is the writing sequence meeting the needs of the students? Should the new standards be applied to students who began in the old sequence? Should the examination be attached to the last course in the sequence or should students be allowed to take it after every course in the sequence?

Current reconsiderations of the test. At this point, we have identified specific issues which have implications for both remedial and college-level courses. In the remedial and developmental courses, for example, curricular issues arise from the emphasis on "teaching to the test." In the compensatory college-level course, we need to develop new strategies to deal with the discrepancy between the test's emphasis on fluency and organizing strengths and its acceptance of writing errors. For the ESL program, we must design ways to remedy the test's imprecision in defining the abilities of ESL students, in order to place them correctly within the curriculum.

Within the writing sequence, we have been able to use the test to coordinate the efforts of the ACS and English departments.

With this curriculum securely in place, during 1979-80, Lehman College sponsored a Workshop on Writing Across the Curriculum with a membership representing thirteen departments, which I co-chaired. We were able to use the standards established by the WAT, as well as information regarding Lehman students' performance on entrance and later tests, to guide subject area faculty members in their reevaluation of introductory level courses in all divisions. Two major goals were recognized: 1) the increased use of writing as an important means of intellectual exploration in these courses; 2) the redesigning of the syllabus, readings, examination questions, and writing assignments to make them useful and appropriate to beginning students currently in writing courses. The work of this workshop will be extended to upper division courses during 1980-81.

As far as overall gains are concerned, at Lehman we are confident about the use of the test for placement and as a marker of student progress toward competency. We are beginning to be aware of increased possibilities for research and for evaluation of the curriculum and students' response to it. Finally, we have recently discovered that the common test standards can provide a needed framework for discussions of writing across the curriculum.

B: The New York City Schools and the City University
Chair: Marsha Cummins
English Department
Bronx Community College

"The CUNY Writing Assessment Test: 1976-1980"
Dean Marie Jean Lederman
Office of Academic Affairs, CUNY

The major achievement of the CUNY Skills Assessment Program, of which the Writing Assessment Test is a part, is that for the first time there is agreement on standards of minimal competence in reading, writing, and mathematics in the seventeen undergraduate colleges of CUNY. For the first time, the test allows for articulation of standards among students, faculty, and counselors, within colleges and between the senior and community colleges.

The Writing Task Force which developed the test had two major beliefs:

> A piece of student writing indicates writing ability more accurately than a machine-scored standardized test.
>
> The use of a writing sample signals both CUNY English teachers and English teachers in the secondary schools that the business of writing classes is writing.

The Task Force knew that some teaching to the test would be inevitable and so chose a format which replicates the one students are most likely to engage in during their college careers: they are asked to take a position on a subject and to support that position from their experiences or reading. The Task Force recommended that the essays be graded holistically and centrally. Because centralized grading has not been possible, the Task Force decided on a method of decentralized readings which included the centralized training of Chief Readers from each college and then having the Chief Readers train readers on their own campuses. The Task Force developed the grading scale and general guidelines, which appear in the booklet of annotated essays, to aid this process. To ensure reliable results, a yearly audit is conducted, in which seventeen hundred essays are randomly chosen, one hundred from each of the seventeen campuses, and read centrally. The rate of agreement of the last audit (1979) was eighty-five percent--a most respectable rate of agreement.

Professor Lee Odell, a consultant to the Skills Assessment Program in September, 1979, called the writing test "a reasonable response to the problem of assessing students' writing ability" and said that the Task Force has recommended sound procedures for the evaluation of writing. He indicated that the procedures would need to be monitored, essay topics evaluated, and reader reliability data studied each time the tests are administered.

Throughout English Departments in CUNY, faculty members are training themselves and each other to judge competence in similar ways. Although students believe that teacher evaluation of their essays is often capricious, our audit reveals that this is simply untrue and that we are moving closer to achieving consensus in our judgments of writing competence. This should affect the judgments which we make when we grade papers in our classrooms. That English teachers in seventeen urban college campuses can move toward such consensus in evaluating student writing is an achievement of no small significance.

"The Regents Test in Writing"
Anita Wilkes Dore
Director, Communications Arts Unit,
Division of Curriculum and Instruction,
New York City Board of Education

Anita Dore reported on the current status of the New York State Regents Competency Test in Writing, which will soon be a requirement for graduation from New York City high schools.

"Regents Competency Test: Writing in New York City High Schools"
Malcolm Largmann
Assistant Principal, Samuel J. Tilden High School

The high school graduating class of June, 1981 will be required to pass a holistically graded writing test consisting of three writing modes: the business letter, the persuasive essay, and the report based on a given list of data. In the preliminary competency test administered last year, about one-third of high school students failed. Based on this statistic, high schools planned remediation programs, which vary in organization, materials, and approach, their scope determined by the degree of commitment of each school's administration and their implementation harnessed by the current fiscal crisis. For the 1980-1981 school year, the funds for PSEN (Pupils with Special Educational Needs) classes must be used to create programs for remediation, in addition to regular English classes, and the teaching approaches in these classes must differ from those in regular courses. However, there is no limit, other than union contractual agreements, governing these remedial classes. Each high school, therefore, continues to utilize its limited resources to meet its particular needs.

The Regents Competency Test in Writing is far more demanding than the current Basic Competency Test required for a high school diploma. Most high schools strive to have students demonstrate competency by the tenth or eleventh year and offer required remediation courses in each grade for those who are unsuccessful. If the State maintains this hurdle, despite the possibility at the outset of large numbers of failures in urban communities, then future students applying to CUNY should perform better on the CUNY Writing Assessment Test than present students. Our hope in the high schools is that writing achievement levels will be designated for the lower schools and that appropriate teacher training and class time and size will be funded to insure every student a real opportunity to succeed in learning to write competently.

C: The CUNY Writing Test and Current Research in Writing
Chair: Robert Lyons
English Department
Queens College

"Skills Assessment and Academic Success"
Michael Ribaudo
Office of Academic Affairs, CUNY

In his summary of the research projects either recently completed or currently under way, Michael Ribaudo, coordinator of the testing program for CUNY's Office of Academic Affairs, distinguished between the types of studies best carried out centrally and those which might be better handled at the local campus level. He reported on the results of a recent study carried out centrally in which all Spring 1980 transfer students entering the senior colleges with 60 or more credits were tested with the current battery of skills assessment examinations. These students, who had begun college prior to the Fall 1978 semester and were therefore not subject to the skills assessment guidelines, represent the last intact cohort whose movement from sophomore to junior status will not be effected by performance on the examinations. The results of the study indicated that, overall, only 42% of the students tested were able to pass all three tests, with nearly half failing the writing examination. The results of this study will be compared with test results of later cohorts as they become available. He also reported on a study in progress which will follow up on the Fall 1978 CUNY entering freshman class, the first class tested upon entry with the skills assessment examinations. All testing data, both from initial testing and subsequent retesting, is being merged with the students' high school records and college course performance data for the Fall 1978, Spring 1979, Fall 1979, and (by July 1980) Spring 1980 semesters in order to investigate the interrelationships among the variables and the predictiveness of test performance to such outcome measures as overall academic performance, retention, movement through and success in the various remedial sequences. He pointed out that many of the research possibilities are best addressed at the local campus level, since the wide variety of approaches to remediation at the individual campuses makes overall University comparisons difficult to interpret. The Instructional Resource Center is sponsoring the work of four faculty members this semester through released time to carry out individual research interests pertaining to the writing test and its impact on instruction.

"The Effects of Question Type"
Karen L. Greenberg
Co-Director, Hunter College Writing Center

Before I designed my study of the CUNY Writing Test, I created a general research plan for studying the test:

1. Define the minimal writing competencies that the test is designed to measure.

2. Isolate and describe the factors which may be interfering with students' abilities to produce these minimal writing competencies.

3. Choose the specific biasing factors (from step 2) to be experimentally manipulated, define each factor, and provide evidence for the valid and reliable measurement of each factor.

4. Control all other biasing factors (isolated in step 2), run the experiment, and analyze the data.

5. Determine if any of the experimentally manipulated factors significantly helped to elicit the desired minimal writing competencies and incorporate it (or them) into the test format.

In terms of my "step 2" above, many factors attend a particular student's encounter with a particular topic in a particular setting on a particular day.

The study itself is designed to examine the effects of variations in essay test questions on students' writing performance. More specifically, I am investigating the effects of four types of essay exam questions which differ in their "cognitive/intellectual" difficulty and which also differ in the kinds of information which they assume students possess. All four types of questions are controlled for their rhetorical, syntactic, and semantic difficulties.

When the data collection for this study is completed, data will be analyzed with "analysis of variance" and "analysis of covariance" techniques to determine the effects of the four types of questions on assigned holistic score, syntactic complexity, syntactic errors, morphological errors, lexical errors, and essay length. The study will also include several "post hoc" descriptive analyses of the ways in which different types of students respond to the different types of questions.

"The Uses of Narration and Description in Argument"

Patricia Laurence
English Department, City College

In the early stages of a study examining the use of rhetorical modes in fifty student essays written for the CUNY Skills Assessment Test, I confirmed Christensen's observation that the traditional methods of development (narration, description, comparison, definition, cause-effect, process, argument) are real and that they overlap in student writing:

> They are the topics of classical rhetoric. They are the channels our minds naturally run in whether we are writing a sentence or a paragraph or planning a paper. There is no point in restricting a class (as for a whole semester in a freshman course I once taught) to a single method of development till the last week, when we reached what the textbook called 'a combination of methods.' (Notes Toward a New Rhetoric, p. 54)

In focusing on particular modes, I found that narration and description are often embedded in the argument essays of incoming freshmen; however, there is a high correlation between "readability" and the higher scores of those essays which use narration and description in the service of argument. Those essays which lose the reader and the main point by drifting off into narrative and descriptive reveries received lower scores. Further study will describe and analyze students' use of rhetorical modes and apply the findings to teaching.

"A Computer-Assisted Analysis of 48 Papers That Failed the CUNY WAT"

Carolyn Chiterer Gilboa
Academic Skills/SEEK, Lehman College

As part of a large study of the language of student writing, 48 papers that had received scores ranging from 2 through 5 on the CUNY WAT in Spring, 1978 were randomly selected and typed into the computer with all errors intact. An index, a concordance, a KWIC concordance, a word-frequency count, and a comparison with the Brown corpus were done. All the papers included in this part of the study were written by entering freshmen, none of whom had taken a college writing course. All were native speakers of English. The results revealed much more than mere phonological, morphological, and syntactic variations from standard written English. This study proves that native speakers of English who fail the WAT are not merely inexperienced writers but have a totally different concept of communication than the one taken for granted by those in command of the standard variety of written English. The lexical and rhetorical patterns revealed account for the brevity, the lack of development, the preponderance of cliches, the naivete and the "incoherence" encountered at the beginning of a basic writing course. This writing is formulaic in a way that was not previously suspected and that has profound implications for teachers of writing.

STRAND III: GRANTS FOR COLLEGE WRITING

Chair: Judith Barbanel, Queensborough Community College

A: Grants for College Writing I

B: Grants for College Writing II

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A: Grants for College Writing I

Chair: Judith Barbanel
Basic Educational Skills
Queensborough Community College

"The New York City Writing Project (National Endowment for the Humanities)"
Sondra Perl and Richard Sterling
Writing Development Project, Lehman College

The New York City Writing Project serves as a model for the way writers of different levels and abilities can come together. The Project conducts three main programs:

The Summer Institute. In many ways, the Summer Institute is the center of the Project. The twenty-five teachers selected for the Institute write daily, read their writing to each other, learn techniques for responding to writing, study their own writing process, learn strategies for listening to writing, demonstrate approaches to the teaching of writing, and adapt these to meet the needs of different grade levels. Teachers work together to share their expertise and receive additional training from writing specialists.

In-Service Workshops. In the fall and spring, the Project offers all-day workshops, or a series of ten weekly sessions, on the teaching of writing to individual schools, entire districts, and school administrators. In addition, individual consultants can help districts define needs and goals. The in-service program continues the work of the Summer Institute during the school year so that more teachers can experience this powerful model.

Graduate Program at Lehman College. The Project also offers a three-credit graduate course which is a version of the Institute.

"Center for the Improvement of Urban Teaching
(U.S. Department of Health, Education and Welfare)"
Janet Mayes
Baruch College

The Center for the Improvement of Urban Teaching at Baruch College is funded by a grant from the Department of Health, Education and Welfare. The Center was founded on the premise that many minority students fail because teachers have difficulty adjusting their teaching methods and styles to students whose backgrounds and school experiences differ sharply from their own. To increase student success, especially during the first two years of college, the Center helps instructors develop pedagogical, curricular, and interpersonal approaches that meet the unique needs and learning styles of the current student population.

The Center's program offers a comprehensive approach to the improvement of teaching, employing three main strategies that interact with and reinforce one another. The Awareness Strategy utilizes the resources of the National Urban League and ASPIRA of America, the cooperating agencies of the grant, in workshops that focus on the needs of students, faculty attitudes toward students, and students' reactions to various teaching techniques and styles. The Feedback Strategy helps instructors more accurately perceive their own teaching behavior through the use of video tapes and feedback from students. The Instructional Strategy presents successful teaching behavior, providing faculty with models that should increase student achievement. This strategy also directs teachers toward curricular change by having them examine existing innovative materials and develop new ones.

B: Grants for College Writing II
Chair: Meredith Young
Basic Educational Skills
Queensborough Community College

"English as a Second Language/English as a Second Dialect (U.S. Department of Health, Education and Welfare)"
Iona Anderson
Teacher Education, Medgar Evers College

The ESL/ESD Program is a comprehensive federally funded language development program designed to meet the educational needs of students for whom English is either a second language (ESL) or a second dialect (ESD).

Two special features of the program are that it acknowledges Black Dialect as a system of communication with its own linguistic pattern and that it applies the techniques and methodology of ESL instruction to the teaching of ESD. ESL-trained teachers are keenly aware of the interference caused by the linguistic patterns of a student's dialect.

Participants in the ESL/ESD Program are selected from the entering class in September and February on the basis of the foreign language or dialect interference shown in their writing samples. Once in the program, students receive support services: an ESL peer tutoring lab; and personal, academic, and career counseling supplied by an ESL counselor.

"Police Writing Project (Fund for the Improvement of Postsecondary Education)"
Arthur Pfeffer
English Department, John Jay College

The New York City Police Foundation has obtained funding from FIPSE for a major new addition to the Police Department's management training programs. Over the next two years, experts in the teaching of writing, mainly from John Jay College of Criminal Justice, will create a sequence of workshops to train selected management personnel in the arts and skills of effective writing.

The skills include organizing, summarizing, using facts and examples, controlling style and tone, choosing correct words, arguing a point convincingly, and communicating with various audiences. For administrators, improved police writing will make reading easier, decision-making more positive, and communication of policy and procedures more effective.

The Writing Project will survey the history and traditions of Police Department writing and study the regulations governing writing. In addition to evaluating writing skills, the staff will identify those current practices which produce the best writing and will incorporate them into the workshops. Where deficiencies are found, the staff will recommend ways to remedy them. The Project will cover bulletins, orders, reports, press releases, letters to the public, budget narratives, training guides, and other materials.

The Writing Project is divided into three stages:

1. Data gathering (October 1979 to February 1980) and data analysis (March to August 1980). Staff will observe how police department writing is done; they will interview key personnel in selected bureaus and precincts, collect many samples of documents, and analyze and evaluate the results.

2. Curriculum design (September 1980 to January 1981). Staff will design several writing workshops to meet the Department's needs and will produce texts and teaching materials.

3. Pilot courses, evaluation, and conference (February to August 1981). Staff will offer pilot writing workshops, evaluate the curriculum, and hold a nationwide conference on police management writing. The Project, in addition to its direct impact on improving writing in the Department, will serve as a model of nationwide significance.

STRAND IV: ENGLISH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE

Chair: Nancy Duke S. Lay, City College

A: Continuing Dialogue Between ESL and English Teachers

B: Do We Cramp Their Style?

C: Making Connections--Sounds, Rules, Usage

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A: Continuing Dialogue Between ESL and English Teachers
Chair: Nancy Duke S. Lay
English Department
City College

"Expectations of Students Entering Freshman Composition: The Controversy Between Teachers of English and ESL at Brooklyn College"
Leo Zanderer
English Department, Brooklyn College

Last fall the Committee of Freshman English denied ESL faculty the right to teach credit-bearing courses in writing. An evaluation of the grading practices of ESL teachers indicated that commentary was insufficient, plagiarism was too often unchallenged, and grading was one to one-and-one-half grades higher than those of the Committee. Discussions between the ESL teachers and the Committee brought some light but little real satisfaction: ESL teachers felt that the English Department was unappreciative of the special needs of ESL students; the Committee suggested the ESL teachers were marking progress at the expense of standards.

Neglected was the real issue: how to provide for curricula structures in literature and the humanities which would allow ESL students to extend their liberal education and writing experience without lowering standards. The Freshman Committee could not consider this greater issue however; its purpose was to establish and maintain grading criteria; it was not responsible for curricula innovation and issues of methodology. While the Committee's self-definition is accurate, its limited functions point to what has always been wrong with the College's response to the "writing crisis"--of which the ESL dilemma is only the most recent example. The origins and brief history of the Committee make this clear.

The Committee was established in 1974 in response to the Department's surmise that the sizeable group of newer inexperienced teachers hired to teach freshman English during Open Enrollment were jeopardizing standards. Though the Committee members were chosen on the basis of their ability to work well with people rather than for their interest in preserving standards, their prime task was to keep things intact. Though more experienced teachers were invited to sit in, they rarely joined. As the newer teachers left through attrition and various sorts of "proficiency" exams were mandated, the Committee gradually became an administrative and testing arm of the English Department.

The Department still suffers the existence of the Committee which has become a bureaucratic necessity. The Committee was once resented as a symbol of the new students who were difficult to teach and didn't really "belong." Now it is a sign of a creeping bureaucracy that is the dubious spawn of post-Open Enrollment problems. The Committee does not deal with the issue of writing as a problematic essential in teaching our students, nor does the Department think about it.

In the absence of leadership by the English Department, the College's attitude towards writing is not significantly changed from what it was five years ago. Writing is of course respected. Those who can write are worth something. Writing courses, writing committees, and teachers of writing are not. No representative body at the College is currently trying to think through a general program for writing--at curricular and other levels--which would serve every student during his four years of study.

B. Do We Cramp Their Style?
Chair: Nancy Duke S. Lay
English Department
City College

"Psycho- and Sociolinguistic Themes Among Urban ESL Students"
Donald R. H. Byrd
English Language Center, LaGuardia Community College

Educators working in inner-city higher education have for some time been aware of the unique and perplexing needs of their ESL students (Borodkin, et al., 1975; Shaughnessy, 1977; Byrd and Klosek, 1978). Plagued by the dearth of systematized data, research, and descriptions, these educators frequently have to follow rigid developmental or remedial curricula that do not consider the needs of second-language learners.

My paper sets forth the areas in which research is needed and materials must be developed: 1) definitions of ESL populations; 2) accurate psycho- and sociolinguistic descriptions--such as how these learners view themselves, their own groups, and the values, goals, and motivations of the majority English-speaking group, and how these factors affect classroom learning; 3) detailed analysis of communicative dysfunctions, which would require, as Shaughnessy suggested, understanding the "logic" of "substandard" language usage; 4) the effects of peer mediation on language monitoring and performance; 5) methodologies that lessen classroom confrontation and support the student. Furthermore, subject-area teachers and administrators need to be informed of the results of such studies in order to alter curricula and materials.

Only after these matters have been attended to can one realistically talk about tightening standards, too often a concern that penalizes inner-city students for the inappropriate instruction they receive.

"Outlining Reconsidered: Aid to Coherence or Obstacle to Expression?"

Sally Mettler
Speech and Theatre Department, Lehman College

Many teachers of oral and written rhetoric consider outlining a crucial preliminary step in creating a composition or speech. In basic oral communication courses, a substantial segment of the syllabus is usually reserved for teaching basic principles of outlining and patterns of arrangement.

However, outlining as a first step implies some basic assumptions which may not be valid, especially for second-language and non-standard speakers; first, teachers assume that students have sufficient command not only of correct but of concise English structures and that they know the connotations, as well as the denotations, of standard English lexicon well enough to be able to express main ideas and sub-points succinctly in phrases or brief sentences. Creating a speech or paper by arranging such phrases or sentences according to prescription is frequently not helpful to the ESL or ESD student; in fact, it is often an obstacle to expression. Furthermore, preliminary outlining presumes certain cognitive patterns and learning styles. Teachers assume that students think first in idea-kernels, then expand those kernels into developed sentences and paragraphs. The reality may very well be that they begin to create with broad, even amorphous, concepts and then reduce them to kernels. Therefore, if we adhere strictly to teaching outlining as the basis for further expression, we may be setting up verbal and cognitive obstacles that many students cannot surmount.

I believe, instead, that the outline should emerge as a valuable construct that students can depend on while they work toward the final rhetorical form of their papers or speeches. Students can begin by free-writing almost all of the information they wish to impart. Then they can extract an outline from this continuous discourse, using a step-by-step editing, numbering, and ordering procedure which they can describe and demonstrate. They number each sentence, think about where it belongs in the paper, and group the numbered sentences under the rubrics of Introduction, Body, and Conclusion. In this way, the outline becomes an intermediate step in composition, rather than the initial one; it gives students the opportunity to reorganize their work and then to complete it with confidence. In oral communication, the re-ordered outline is the final stage of preparation; it becomes the "script" for the student's presentation.

"Tutors Take the Cramp Out!"
Trudith Smoke
Academic Skills/SEEK, Hunter College

The support services of a tutor are extremely valuable in the ESL classroom for both cognitive and affective reasons. Even ESL students who get the same scores on writing proficiency tests have diverse language problems. Because the typical ESL class is heterogeneous, the tutor can offer important services to both student and teacher.

While class is in progress, a tutor can help individual students correct errors and resolve problems in the papers they are working on, offering more immediate and personal feedback than the teacher can. The tutor is also in a better position to talk with the shy, withdrawn student who is not able to listen or speak comfortably in the new language. The tutor can also work with small groups, reinforcing difficult points by offering clear examples and initiating activities that help to overcome writing blocks. With groups of more advanced students, the tutor can provide extra vocabulary, idiom practice, and stylistic norms.

The tutor helps the teacher by offering an alternative point of view during weekly or daily conferences with students. Sometimes it is the tutor working steadily and individually with students who discovers the key to a student's language difficulties. In addition, the instructor trains the tutor, creating a professional who is able to recognize particular ESL problems and therefore serve students better.

Students who get attention and care from a second person in the classroom respond favorably. They begin to feel special and often come to see their writing problems as part of a process in which they are supported and given feedback by people who know their work and can see their progress.

C: Making Connections--Sounds, Rules, Usage
Chair: Mel Baron
English Department
Kingsborough Community College

"Coordinating Sound and Structure"
Rashida Aziz and James Weaver
English Language Center, LaGuardia Community College

Our paper typifies our approach to coordinating the teaching of oral and written English by presenting our techniques and materials in three specific areas: regular past tense, final "s" in nouns and verbs, and awareness of paragraph structure. We discuss our assumptions about the relationship between the two modes: 1) If students don't say something correctly, they most likely don't write it correctly; and 2) contrasting structures helps students recognize significant features of standard English.

"Who Loves Whom When Joe Says To Joann I Love You?"
Uday C. Naval
Academic Skills/SEEK, Lehman College

The distinction between direct and indirect forms of quotation is one of the most neglected areas in ESL instruction. Yet the lack of such distinction can be a source of terrible confusion in communication, especially in its written form.

While the native student of English sometimes has his intuitive first-language strategies to fall back on to explain the confusion, this obviously cannot happen in the case of the ESL learner. The latter very often does not know the conventions of English that indicate the indirect mode of speech. Such a student has to be presented with clear-cut information about: punctuation, pronoun reference, tense sequence, some adverbial expressions, conjunctions, and certain verb substitutions. Fortunately, the rules that govern the two modes of reported speech are unambiguous enough so that students can fully understand their fundamental differences and conquer difficulties with practice.

My presentation examines actual student writings that exemplify confusion between the two modes, discusses the rules pertaining to each of the six areas mentioned above, and suggests strategies for achieving control when reporting speech.

"Using Humanistic Exercises to Teach Grammar"

Len Fox
Educational Services/SEEK, Brooklyn College

Like other teachers, I have spent much time standing in front of classes explaining grammar rules and writing sentences to illustrate them. And like other teachers, I have found that this procedure bores students and has little positive effect on their writing. I have been exploring the use of more interesting, "humanistic" exercises that not only give students practice in grammar but also allow them to learn about themselves and one another. One example is having pairs of students interview each other and then speak or write about what they have discovered. In addition to students getting to know each other, this activity gives them practice in using third person "s." Other activities elicit practice in the present perfect tense, articles, the conditional, and other areas of grammar.

STRAND V: TEACHING MODELS

Chairs: Ann Raimes, Hunter College
Gail Gordon, Hunter College

A: Affective Approaches

B: Planning Courses

C: Language and Voices

D: Methods

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A: Affective Approaches

Chair: Diane Clunan
Developmental English Program
Hunter College

"Student Attitude and Freshman Writing"
Lilia Melani
English Department, Brooklyn College

Without question, a freshman writing program must identify students' writing needs, offer courses addressing those needs, and place students in appropriate courses. Equally important, students must be willing to accept the evaluation of their writing and to commit themselves to learning how to write. Unfortunately, large numbers of students have attitudes and behavior patterns which make academic success difficult or even impossible.

Additionally, academic practices and faculty attitudes sometimes encourage negative self-image or hostility toward learning. For instance, the CUNY Writing Assessment Test is essentially a placement test; yet we talk about "failing" and "passing" the test and about "cut-off lines." As Director of Freshman English, I deal with students who are upset about their placement; ideally, I would help them accept being in a non-credit workshop and still feel worthwhile, but I often lack the time or strength for this effort, which is usually difficult and not always successful.

Writing programs must address the problem of student attitude. At a minimum, someone with time, patience, and understanding should be available to help individual students work through their upset and to reassure them of their intrinsic worth. Also faculty must separate their judgments of student writing from their judgments of students' thinking and values, and also distinguish between these judgments and their own biases. Finally, there need to be ongoing workshops to help students deal with judgment--their own judgments of themselves and the judgments of others about them.

"The Impact of Interest on Academic Achievement"

Myrna B. Charry
Basic Educational Skills, Queensborough Community College

Thorndike (1935) distinguished between "intrinsic" and "extrinsic" interest and held that the former came from "within," and the latter was dependent on external consequences. Intrinsic interest, he noted, predisposed a person to learn one thing and not the other.

Experimental research pointed to the impact of intrinsic interest on academic achievement. For example, Thorndike (1917) found .89 correlation between college students' expressed interest and their final grades. More recently, Asher (1978) and Eisenberg (1978) found that students' achievement was positively correlated to their interests.

The implications at the college level are manifold. First, data regarding students' interests should be gathered prior to registration. In this way, students could be channeled to classes in which they express interest. Second, remedial classes, when mandated, could be taught in tandem with content classes in which students are enrolled. Remedial reading materials could then be related to content classes in which students are enrolled and have expressed interest. Third, teachers of remedial courses could gather interest surveys so that all reading materials match students' interests.

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"Riches of the Spirit: A Generation of New Yorkers"

Joan Gregg and Beth Pacheco
Developmental Skills, New York City Community College
Serena Nanda
Anthropology Department, John Jay College

This photo-essay grew out of an oral history project involving New Yorkers of various socio-economic and ethnic groups who grew up in the city between 1910 and 1930. In conducting our interviews, which focused on qualitative aspects of adaption to the urban environment, we were struck by the self-confidence, humor, and unregretful reminiscence which characterized these older New Yorkers. In their remarks, two stereotypes are dispelled: the one, of the elderly as unassertive, dependent, and disengaged, and the other, of New Yorkers as fearful, uncompassionate, and frustrated by life in the big city. Indeed, what emerges is that the autonomy of these older citizens, their affirmation of life in their later years, is intimately bound up with the vitality, diversity, and opportunity for personal enrichment unique to New York. As these individuals spin out their life histories, it becomes apparent that the demands of city living have not defeated them at all; on the contrary, these have challenged them to reach ever deeper into their reservoirs of energy, humor, and strength to build the constructive patterns of action and response which continue to mark their lives.

B: Planning Courses
Chair: Ann Raimes
Developmental English Program
Hunter College

"Repeatable Elements in the Training of Writers"
Rosemary Deen and Marie Ponsot
English Department, Queens College

Learning writing ought to be a substantial pleasure and a substantial discipline, like training in music or the classical languages. Such pleasure and discipline effect change and not just in students who begin as easy or experienced writers. Each student should acquire the habits of a writer: habits of initiating, sustaining, and controlling writing.

Amidst the projects (and even the gimmicks) of teaching writing, it seems worth asking: What are the essential, repeatable elements in writing? What can the student do at will and, therefore, on demand? And how can the student practice the essential skills in class and out, often enough to make a change in his writing habits?

We think these are the teachable, repeatable skills essential to writing. (We distinguish them from elements certainly important, but in which we cannot train students.) We can teach:

Prolific writing. This enables writers to generate and sustain writing. (We cannot teach invention.)

Beginning with whole structures. (We cannot teach development.)

Making observations and separating them from inferences. (We cannot teach "logic.")

Rewriting. (We cannot teach revision.)

Writing both abstractly and concretely. (We cannot teach style.)

Broadly, this is how we teach these skills:

Begin where writers are able. In practice this means having a core of work that students cannot do wrong.

There are repeatable elements in writing, and we work by repeating them. Skills are practiced. (Try the obvious.)

Treat student expository writing as literature. We see no sense in limiting the term "creative writing" to three of of the genres of literature.

Submerging our own abstract or discursive knowledge of literature, we use it to evoke literature in student writing.

Make of the classroom a community of writers. A class (rather than a teacher and a student in a tutorial relationship) provides the ideal circumstances for writing: concentration and continuity.

Treat all writing skills (and grammar itself) as constructive and not remedial.

"What Kind of Developmental Sequence Makes the Best Sense in a Writing Course?"
Bill Bernhardt
English Department, College of Staten Island

Every course has some sort of hierarchical principle built in, even if only an implicit one, because every course moves forward in time. And every instructor feels that he or she is moving progressively from the more fundamental to the more advanced, from necessities to luxuries. But is there a kind of sequence which makes more sense than other kinds?

Most developmental sequences are based, I think, on one of the following principles or models:

1. An analytic breakdown of the finished product into a succession of increasingly complex organizations of sub-skills.

   For example: words -- sentences -- paragraphs -- larger rhetorical structures

2. An extrapolation from the work habits of experienced writers.

   For example: Selecting a topic -- making an outline -- preparing a first draft -- etc. (Old style)

   or

   Brainstorming -- finding a focus -- etc. (New style)

Each of these models has its adherents and merits. I wish to suggest an alternative model which I consider preferable.

We can ask, What are the developmental stages which a writer (rather than a piece of writing) inevitably passes through during his apprenticeship? Is there an inescapable sequence? I believe that there is:

Writing for oneself.
Sharing with others.
Writing to others.

The presentation focused on three questions:

--How is each of the above stages to be defined?
--How could such a schema be implemented in the classroom?
--What special advantages does this model provide?

"Writing for Prospective Teachers"
Warren Rosenberg
English Department, Queens College

For the past year at Queens College, I have been teaching one of the specialized required composition courses, "Writing for Prospective Teachers." It is a course which consciously deals with the interrelationship of writing and teaching.

More important, perhaps, is the connection such a course has to "developing college writers." In the most fundamental sense, college writers are developed in elementary and high school; consequently, an improvement in the writing of prospective teachers, and an increase in their awareness of the dynamics of learning to write, would strengthen their input at those vital earlier stages. I see this course as a potential link between English and education departments on the various CUNY campuses.

The course is not primarily remedial. As it is the last course in the required sequence, most of the students are already competent writers. The aim, then, is for the students to attain a higher degree of self-consciousness about their writing and about their prospective careers. Through a series of writing assignments, readings, peer analyses, and class discussions, students begin to move from a "passive" student consciousness into a more active role--the role they will be assuming as teachers. Because control over language is seen (after much discussion) as the key to that role, the student's ability to control her own writing is shown to be integrally related to successful teaching.

"Simultaneous Reading-Writing Instruction"
Paul Michael Ramirez
Developmental Skills, New York City Community College

A hundred years ago physicians began reporting deficits of both reading and writing following lesions to the "language centers" of the brain. Since that time, many investigators interested in educational issues have demonstrated a significant correlation between overall reading and writing ability. Besides the underlying neurological basis of this correlation, we should note that both processes are comparable on a psycholinguistic basis. That is, these two language arts complement one another in that semantic and syntactic levels of representation are vital to both comprehension and production in reading and writing. Proficiency in both reading and writing will therefore result from a mastery of semantic and syntactic clues to meaning. Since both processes are somewhat interdependent, this presentation examines a methodology whereby reading and writing skills may be taught simultaneously. The rationale behind implementing this methodology is also discussed.

C: Language and Voices
Chair: Gail Gordon
Academic Skills/SEEK
Hunter College

"Tapping the Student's Inner Voice"
Manette R. Berlinger
Basic Educational Skills, Queensborough Community College

I teach basic writing by using specially planned "experiments" aimed at having a student discover: his own "voice" as a writer and thinker--what we might call "persona" or "style;" and his perception of the audience as a constantly changing variety of readers, ranging from himself, to me, or to anyone or any group, each variety requiring an appropriate form of address.

I have found that locating and identifying these two aspects of the writing experience have clarified great uncertainties in students who have previously failed at writing, and beyond that, have stimulated a maturity of self-concept that leads to sophisticated expression.

"Ethnicity and Linguistics: New Approaches to an Old Problem"
Thelma L. Borodkin
Academic Skills/SEEK, Lehman College

It is well known that multi-racial/ethnic students are experiencing great difficulty acquiring basic academic skills and that their difficulty is often tied to their language/dialect. Humanistic education connects feelings and mind. "Teaching the whole child" means something more as educators become increasingly aware of the importance of making students feel comfortable in class. This acceptance seems to be particularly significant to multi-racial/ethnic students who view their language/dialect as part of their ethnicity.

Recent research by Rist, Rosenthal, Shuy, DeStefano, and F. Williams indicates the importance of teachers' attitudes in the educative process; teachers' evaluations, frequently based on students' language/dialect, tend to devalue their students' code. However, linguistically educated teachers can help students appreciate their language/dialect as an expression of their ethnicity and help them want to gain skill in the majority code as an addition to, not as a substitute for, their code.

This paper, based on my research and experience with such students, suggests how crucial particular linguistic and ethnic information is to teachers of multi-racial/ethnic students and shows how a new evaluation of their language/dialect by their teachers can help students become active participants in the learning of the code of the majority.

"Speech in the Developmental Writing Classroom"
Delorese Ambrose
Developmental Education Program, Brooklyn College

This paper, written from the perspective of a speech instructor, encourages integrating communication skills into college developmental writing courses and suggests how to utilize structured speaking exercises to teach writing.

It presents an oral communication profile of underprepared college freshmen in developmental speech courses at Brooklyn College. The profile provides the basis for comparing oral communication deficiencies and writing deficiencies, and for discussing how one communication ability influences the other. The general goals of Brooklyn College's developmental speech course, which parallels those of the developmental writing course, are also outlined. Some implications for integrating reading and writing and speaking and listening are noted.

The principle of the "imagined agent," central to the processes of reading and writing, is paralleled to the principles of "real audience" analysis and "real" and immediate feedback as used in the speech classroom to shape and reshape the speaker's message. Concrete suggestions are offered for helping students develop skill in analyzing audiences and in using audience feedback to generate and develop ideas orally. Finally, the paper tells how the skills and principles learned through speaking exercises can be applied to the process of writing.

"Act As Though You Believed: Journal Writing in Beginning Composition Classes"
Jane Schwartz
English Department, Brooklyn College

My paper looks at the value of using an in-class, private journal as an "exercise" for beginning composition students. Like many teachers of writing, I noticed that my students were often upset and intimidated by the process of writing itself, regardless of the topic or the content of an assignment. This didn't altogether surprise me--but what did shock and trouble me a great deal was that they seemed to have equal difficulty, and became equally distressed, even when writing up preliminary notes or rough drafts in class. They seemed overwhelmed by the necessity to get "things" (usually mechanics) right the first time. As a result, they could hardly get started at times, and could not take advantage of the "rough draft" as an aid or a necessary step in the process of composing a paper.

I decided to try using journals to bridge the gap between "mental" activity and the rough draft, hoping to free students from the fears that some of them had about writing anything incorrectly. My thinking was this: if students could learn that, under certain circumstances, it was okay to write incorrectly, then perhaps they would be less frightened writing their rough drafts and would be more willing to take risks, develop ideas, and actually get more of their thoughts down on paper.

My paper explains how I introduced this project to them, our initial discussions, and our brainstorming sessions about form and content. Each student had to buy a separate notebook, which was not to be used for anything other than journal writing, and bring it to every class. I had them write for a ten-minute stretch almost every period. In short, they could write about anything in any form. The only rule was that they had to keep writing for the full ten minutes: this was not a "thinking" time, but a "writing" time. I emphasized that they were not to worry about any of their usual concerns: spelling, punctuation, grammar, sentence structure, organization, or even coherence. They found this hard to believe; they were even more skeptical about my promise never to collect the journals.

Next my paper looks at the results of this project, which I carried on with two classes and am now trying with a third. This was not a rigorous, controlled experiment, nor do I claim to have collected any quantifiable data on the writing process. Rather, I present an assessment of the effects of this experiment, not so much on the students' actual writing (that would have required a larger sample of students and much more stringent methods of measurements, including a control group), but on their perceptions of themselves as writers and on their subjective evaluations as to its impact on their work.

I discuss: the reasons for initiating the project; the students' early reactions and resistances; the process itself and my observations of it; students' reactions -- during the term, at the end of the term, and several months later; and my reactions.

D: Methods
Chair: Marcia Silver
English Department
Brooklyn College

"The Visual Method in Teaching Writing"
Lewis Meyers
Developmental English Program, Hunter College

The visual method of teaching writing is extremely effective for remedial students, as much as for what it does not submit them to in the process of learning as for the possibilities it opens up to them. Many students who have problems in reading have difficulty learning the fundamentals of grammar, paragraph structure, and essay organization from the prose models they are asked to emulate. Other students cannot learn how to produce concepts and to use them imaginatively if all superordinate structures, from the most basic to the most complex, are already formulated.

Visual materials, however, provide a factuality and clear path of cognitive development necessary for students on the remedial level. Such materials can be used to instruct various writing components. In regard to grammar, stipulative assignments are fruitful. Pronoun reference or subject-verb agreement, for instance, can be taught as a means of joining visible objects (people and things) within a picture in standard written form. Rhetorical modes, such as comparison and contrast, are clarified by images. Teaching essay organization is facilitated by the clear distinction between descriptive and interpretative approaches visuals make necessary. Visual materials that imply meaning rather than state it outright help develop cognitive skills.

Checking their own performance, students can match their output against an original image. Since what is graphic is memorable, retention as well as acquisition of writing skills is enhanced.

"The Use of Film Analogues in Writing Courses"
Brian Gallagher
English Department, LaGuardia Community College

Although it has been generally recognized that today's students, particularly those in lower-level composition courses, tend to be more visually than linguistically acute, most work done with film in the composition classroom has been confined to using films as sources of themes or as a general inspiration for writing. However, film can also be used in a generative-structural way: to illustrate organizational communications structures and to suggest how similar structures can (and should) be used in writing. For instance, the "Odessa Steps" sequence from Eisenstein's Potemkin can be used to make students aware of the need for alternating between "long shot" and "close-up," and between group action and the acts of individuals, when describing public scenes. Similarly, "My Childhood," a TV film on the boyhoods of Hubert Humphrey and James Baldwin, introduces students to the intricacies of the comparison-and-contrast structure, while Grierson's documentary on the British Postal Service, "Night Mail," provides a valuable analogue for process writing. Having used these and other films -- such as Hitchcock's The Thirty-Nine Steps in a two-part lesson on cause-and-effect/logical analysis -- as supplements to more traditional classroom approaches to writing structures and strategies, I am led to conclude that students usually find it easier to construct with words once they have "seen" how to do it.

"The Well-Wrought Outline"
Sheema H. Karp and Barry Capella
Developmental English Program, Hunter College

As instructors at Hunter College, we have become increasingly aware of our students' inexperience in outlining and of their fear that it will interfere with their writing time and, consequently, their performance in English. Because of these experiences, we have each devised a number of lessons that have proven successful.

Our lessons first stress the basic four-part structure of an essay: an introduction with thesis; two parts developing the thesis (this could consist of two or more paragraphs with topic sentences); and a conclusion. Taken together, the lessons utilize both analysis and synthesis, the first lesson demonstrating the intrinsic relationship between the outline of an essay and its final form, and the second lesson generating specific details from a relatively general and vague body paragraph.

The first outlining exercise involves analyzing one or more student essays to enable students to perceive the concrete relationship between the logical movement through the parts of an essay and an adequate outline. In this instance, an essay about the problems of teenage pregnancy is used. Appropriate analogies of skeletal structure having been pointed out, students are instructed: first, to assess the essay holistically, and second, to extract the four-part outline lurking within.

Generally, students find the essay interesting but confusing and the implicit outline inadequate. Discussion reveals that although the thesis provokes interest and could lead to a compound development, the single body paragraph of this three-paragraph essay merely discusses general causes of and solution for the problem of teenage pregnancy. While this is perfectly legitimate content for an essay on this topic, there is no substantial link between the promise of the thesis to discuss consequences and the subsequent development of the essay. Thus, although the ideas in the essay are connected, their movement is associative rather than logical, which leaves the thesis unsupported. The follow-up class exercise includes rewriting the outline so that the details of the development actually support the assertions made in the thesis, thereby carrying out the intent of the essay.

The second approach to outlining excerpts a single body paragraph from a passable essay entitled "Learning to Love." Students are asked to list specifically--using only the content of that body paragraph--what distinguishes teenagers from other age groups.

After being constantly pressed about specificity, the students gradually admit that little, if any, detailed information about teenagers can be found. With that admission, the main purpose of the lesson begins. Two general ideas from the paragraph are selected for outlining and development. Since most students are in their late-teens or early twenties, many of them contribute to a class discussion that focuses on the physical, sexual, and psychological aspects of being a teenager, as well as on their expectations about education, careers, and love.

By the end of the class, they have defined more clearly what it means to be a teenager and have generated enough suggestions for a number of at-home topics: what a teenager is, a change in attitude or feeling that the student underwent, a change in attitude or feeling that the student has observed in someone else. In addition, students appreciate the intricate relationship of outlining to well-developed, interesting writing.

By constantly reaffirming our belief in the necessity of outlining and by supplementing these lessons with others throughout the semester, we believe that our students gradually realize the benefits of outlining not only in expository writing courses, but in any discipline requiring writing.

"Integrating Research into a Freshman Composition Course"

Lenore Beaky
English Department, LaGuardia Community College

A library research component, properly defined, can be appropriately and practically included in a freshman composition course. The reasons for our reluctance to include research techniques in freshman composition are all too clear and, at first, compelling. The course already attempts to cover the vast territory of expository, descriptive and argumentative writing, coherence and variety of thought, precision, vividness and correctness of expression--and all this within fifteen weeks or less. Further, if research is defined as a specialized form of inquiry, it will be perceived as best suited to a subject discipline.

However, I believe that the most basic concepts and techniques of research bear an intimate relationship to other concepts learned in freshman composition. Students learn to formulate positions and to support those positions in a systematic way. They move from experiential to analytical modes of writing. English departments are best qualified to teach the research paper as formal written discourse requiring a thesis, coherence, and amplification. The gathering of secondary material is less important in this course than the use of that material. The research component should teach students the basics of how to gather facts and opinions, but more important, how to use those facts and opinions, how to document their use, and how to avoid plagiarism.

One means of integrating research into freshman composition was developed by Professor Sandra Hanson, at LaGuardia. Students are assigned an expository essay; when this essay is completed, they are asked to add to it research in the form of quotations or paraphrases, footnotes and a bibliography. Other instructors break down the research process into its steps. Students may be asked to compile a bibliography, choose a thesis for a paper, select quotations from their sources, and demonstrate knowledge of correct footnote and bibliography formats.